

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### DEAD BIRDS AND TREE SQUIRREL TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS

The first West Nile Virus (WNV)-positive dead birds have been found in five cities served by San Bernardino County Vector Control Program (SBCVCP). The first bird was a Lesser Goldfinch reported and collected on June 27, 2008, from the community of Blue Jay and sent to California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory for processing (necropsy) and tested by UC Davis Center for Vector-Borne Diseases (CVEC). The bird was collected on the 92000 block of Thunderbird Drive in Blue Jay. The other four dead birds were American crows collected on July 8, from the cities of Fontana, Grand Terrace, Rialto and San Bernardino. The American crows were subjected to VecTest and RAMP test by SBCVCP to detect presence of WNV and submitted for confirmation by CVEC. Additionally, a Gray Western Squirrel found in the city of Crestline on June 25, 2008, tested positive for WNV also suggesting increased WNV activity in the mountain communities for the past three weeks.

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These results indicate that current weather conditions, existing water sources and high foreclosure rates may have increased the WNV risk in the County. WNV transmission is ongoing and the public needs to be vigilant by reporting dead birds and mosquito breeding sites to vector control. Additionally, SBCVCP recommends using personal protection to avoid mosquito bites.

Terri Williams, a Public Health Program Manager for San Bernardino County stated, "The vector control agencies within the county are working diligently to reduce mosquito population and has increased surveillance efforts in the affected communities. Public education, active vector control operations, and surveillance activities are ongoing to minimize the impact of mosquitoes and WNV."

Vector Control staff are looking for additional mosquito breeding sources and trapping adult mosquitoes for virus testing. Since mosquitoes are dependent on standing water for breeding, residents are encouraged to look for and eliminate any stagnant water on their properties. Mountain communities are particularly impacted by tree-hole mosquitoes that breed in tree holes and small containers left to collect water. We advise homeowners to remove small containers that may hold water on their properties.

Property owners with pools are encouraged to keep them clean. Green or dirty pools impact entire neighborhoods and mosquitoes breeding in such pools fly over property lines to bite people several blocks away. Please report green pools and other sources of mosquito breeding to San Bernardino County Vector Control Program at (909) 388-4600.

San Bernardino County citizens can protect themselves from mosquito bites by taking these precautions:

- **Drain or Dump...**Remove all standing water around your property where mosquitoes lay eggs such as birdbaths, green swimming pools, ponds, old tires, buckets, clogged gutters, or even puddles from leaky sprinklers.
- **Dawn and Dusk...**Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active.
- **Dress...**Wear shoes, socks, and long pants and long-sleeved shirts that are loose fitting and light colored.
- **DEET...**Apply insect repellent containing DEET according to manufacturer's directions.
- **Doors...**Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes to prevent mosquitoes from entering home.

Since horses are susceptible to WNV vaccines are available and horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians about timely vaccinations.

The Department of Public Health encourages the public to participate in the WNV surveillance program by reporting birds that have been dead for less than 48 hours to the State West Nile Virus toll-free hotline at (877) WNV-BIRD or on-line at [WWW.WNV.CA.GOV](http://WWW.WNV.CA.GOV).

If you are in the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Ontario, Montclair, or Rancho Cucamonga call (909) 635-0307 for the West Valley Vector Control District. For more information about WNV or to report dead birds, visit our website at [www.sbcounty.gov/dehs/vectorcontrol](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dehs/vectorcontrol).

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